

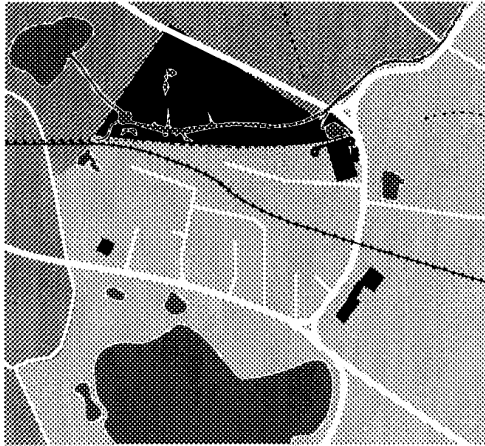
## **4 THE MASTER PLAN**

### **SUB-AREA RECOMMENDATIONS**

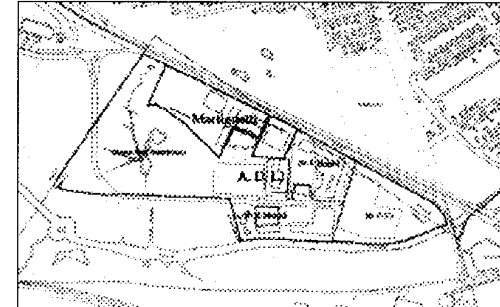
Following the area-wide strategies, more detailed recommendations are made in light of the strengths and opportunities found in each of the four subdistricts within Alewife: Route 2/Alewife Reservation, the Triangle, the Quadrangle and the Fresh Pond Commercial Area.

The site identified as Alewife Center/W.R. Grace, to the east of the Alewife MBTA station across Alewife Brook Parkway, was initially in the study area, but no specific recommendations were made for the site, since there is an existing plan for the development of Alewife Center. Considerations about connections to Alewife Center are included, as are recommendations about Jerry's Pond, a water and open space resource.

## **AREA 1 ROUTE 2/ALEWIFE RESERVATION**



This area consists of two distinct parts: the first is the protected open space land, both in public ownership in the form of the Alewife Reservation, and in private ownership, where it is owned by Arthur D. Little but protected by wetlands regulations. The second is the developable land, sitting strategically between Route 2 and the Alewife Reservation land north of Little River. Occupied by the Arthur D. Little Company and a series of non-conforming strip commercial uses abutting Route 2, this area acts as a gateway to the city and is an important employment resource. It is also an edge to and linkage between significant portions of the open space system of the city.



*Ownership is currently fragmented between the MDC, which controls the Alewife Reservation and two privately held assemblages: the Arthur D. Little office campus and the Route 2 frontage composed of non-conforming strip commercial uses.*

## ACCESS AND LINKAGES

Ideally, access to all private holdings would occur from Acorn Park, the loop road that accesses Arthur D. Little. A road encircling the wetlands could give access to all properties and forego the need for Route 2 curb cuts or frontage roads. Given divergent development objectives between ownership entities, such a pattern in the short term is unlikely. As redevelopment of properties abutting Route 2 occurs, curb cuts should be regulated by the State and frontage road solutions tested.

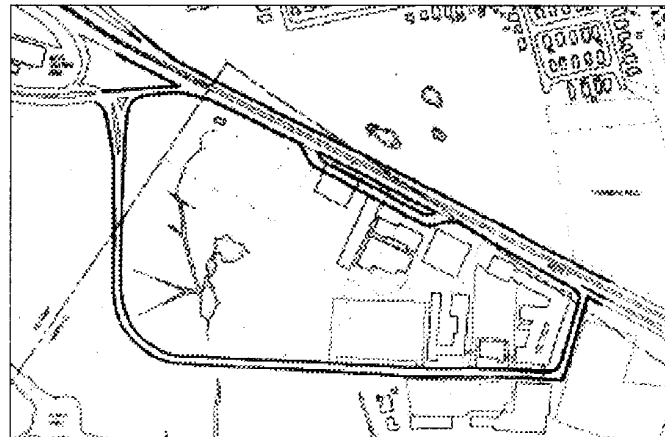
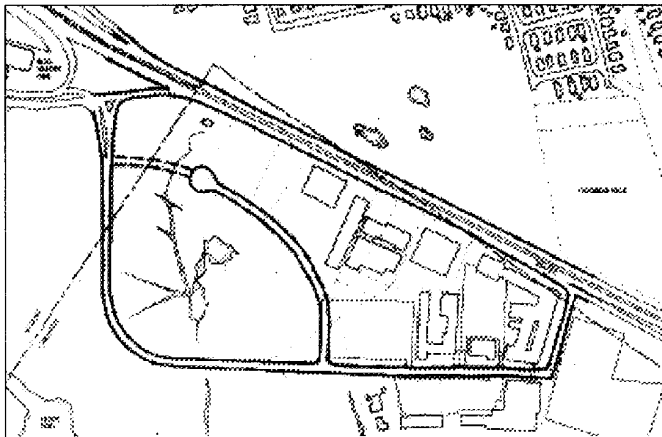
A full frontage road emanating from the access loop in Arlington and extending to the Alewife Station off-ramp is unlikely given the hardship it places on frontage parcel access, as the decision to access properties must be made in Arlington before the properties are even in view.

Access to a partial frontage road is governed by the weaving conflicts generated by traffic weaving into Route

2 from the Lake Street access and egressing from Route 2 to frontage parcels or roads. The solution to the complicated weaving conditions along Route 2 still needs to be worked out; the City will work together with the Massachusetts Highway Department and property owners along Route 2 to implement the best solution.

An abbreviated frontage road is desirable to (a) prevent multiple curb cuts which impact both safety and traffic flow on Route 2, (b) provide a buffer to development thereby permitting an upgrade of the visitor gateway experience to the City, and (c) establish a development framework for frontage parcels.

A series of pedestrian and bicycle routes cross this subdistrict linking resources both within and beyond it. Several of these need upgrading.



The pedestrian route from the Alewife MBTA Station to the Arlington community at Thorndike Field coincides with Cambridge access to the Minuteman Bikeway. These are tangent to this district at its eastern tip. Currently, the quality of the connections are unkempt and inadequate as they cross the Yates Pond viaduct adjacent to the MBTA Station and in conflict with vehicular traffic egressing Route 2 toward the Alewife Station. Sidewalks need to be widened with the concurrent narrowing of the vehicular right-of-way, and general structural and landscape improvements need to be made to promote usage and safety. The sidewalk from the station leading to the Arthur D. Little site needs similar upgrading; enhancing this pedestrian linkage would make the commute by transit more attractive to ADL employees.

This area is also a critical node for bicycle routes, as connections to the Minuteman Bikeway, the Belmont bicycle path, Linear Park, and the Alewife MBTA station converge here. However, the routes do not connect well to each other, and improvements in connecting these paths (also within the Triangle area) are essential to making this area work.

#### **DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK**

If parcels are not assembled or coordinated in a fashion to facilitate rear access, if a development occupies the full Route 2 frontage or a significant portion thereof, and if a frontage road is instigated or imposed as a part of that plan, then the following attributes of a development plan should be instituted within a design guideline package:

- The frontage road should be one way east to accommodate the unconflicted stacking of vehicles exiting Route 2.
- Buildings should be built to a prescribed setback line out of an agreed to but broad palette of materials, and should place entries along the frontage. Loading docks and/or service bays should not occur along the Route 2 frontage.
- The setback dimension should be determined by a combination of factors: landscaped buffer width, two lane minimum frontage road, suitable sidewalk, and consideration of overall site depth such that a marketable footprint can be obtained.
- Parking should be screened from Route 2 by buildings, or housed within a structure. The one way frontage system will require that parking on the northern end of the site be accessed from the wetlands side of the buildings.
- The wetlands should be used as an asset in site design, possibly with the road leading from the frontage road to the parking, forming an internal site 'gateway.' Building heights could be slightly higher abutting such a 'gateway.'
- Unless and until a frontage road is instituted, individual parcels fronting Route 2 should be permitted only a single curb cut, and adjacent properties in common ownership should be encouraged to cluster entries by providing an appropriate on-site circulation system.

## USE

Current zoning for office use is appropriate for this area, with the addition of allowing limited accessory retail uses. Commercial rezoning would congest the area, compromise MDC reservation lands and provide an inappropriate gateway to the city.

## URBAN DESIGN CONCEPTS

As the primary entry to Cambridge from the northwest, this route establishes visual impressions of the city. Upgrading this image could occur through implementation of the access, frontage road, and development framework set forth above. In addition, the following actions are recommended:

- Establish a joint task force with Arlington to coordinate landscape, lighting and signage.
- Through the MDC, initiate and/or reinforce a consistent landscape treatment along this corridor from Arlington to the Fresh Pond Traffic circle at Alewife Brook Parkway and Concord Avenue.
- Upgrade the pedestrian bridge linking Arlington and Cambridge. Transform it into a festive and recognizable celebration of entry to the two cities.
- Provide special lighting and signage abutting the Cambridge side of Route 2 in proximity to frontage development and the pedestrian bridge. Engage the Arts Council in its design.
- Clean and enhance the vegetation surrounding Little Pond in Belmont so that it becomes a visual asset from the access ramps to Route 2. Replace chain link fencing as funding permits.



As Arthur D. Little expands and/or rebuilds its aging buildings, the same campus qualities that exist should govern its reconstruction with the following exceptions:

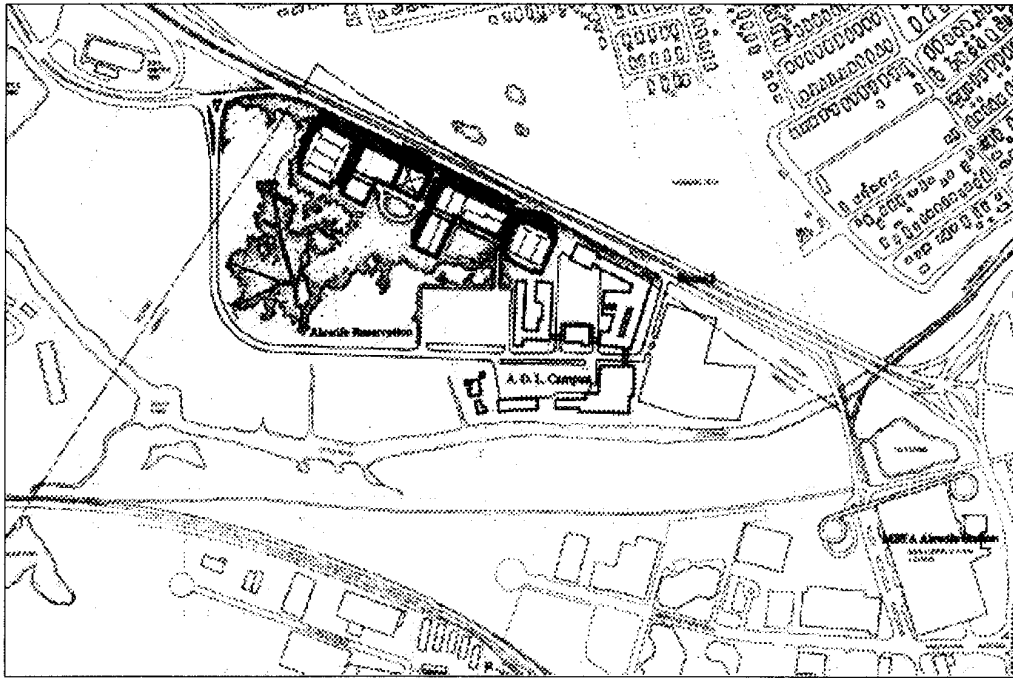
- The architecture should be sensitive to the setting rather than solely functional. It should also be of a consistent palette of materials.
- Buildings abutting Route 2 should recognize its presence and orient jointly to it and to internal campus spaces.
- Buildings abutting the Alewife Reservation should reflect its presence and integrate it as an asset into the design of the campus while not appropriating it from the general public.
- Parking should be subservient to, not dominate public spaces and should generally not abut the Little River.

#### **NATURAL RESOURCES**

The unique aspects of the Alewife Reservation, its sensitive ecology and wetlands and its recreational amenities, require careful planning to ensure that enjoyment of the facility does not harm significant natural features. To achieve this, it is essential that the MDC develop a master plan for the Reservation and a specific management plan to identify and properly maintain those areas that need to be carefully preserved and where public access should be controlled.

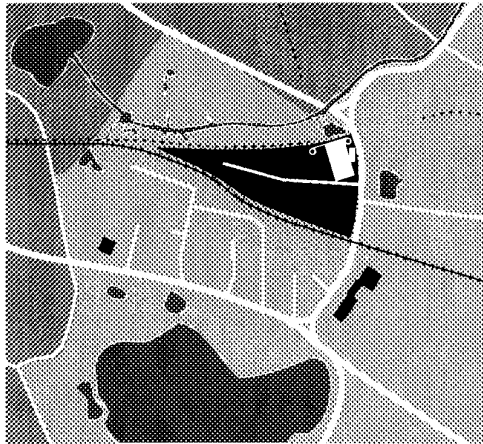
The master plan should also indicate those areas where more intensive and active public use is appropriate. One area where this may be possible is at the southeast corner of the Reservation near the Alewife MBTA station. This area, easily accessible to the public and less sensitive than others from an environmental perspective, provides an opportunity for more active, public use of the Reservation. Benches and tables might be located here to encourage people to stop and eat lunch or to sit and enjoy the view.

The Alewife Reservation master plan should also explore the siting of an interpretive center or museum within or near the Alewife Reservation. This type of facility would serve as an educational center for the local community and the region. A potential location to be considered is the former MDC skating rink, located in Belmont along the northwest edge of the Reservation near Little Pond. Reuse of this site as an Interpretive Center would also assist in meeting the goal for this area of upgrading the entryway into Cambridge.



## **AREA 2 THE TRIANGLE**

The Triangle, the pie-shaped wedge of land between the MDC Reservation, the Fitchburg Main Line and Alewife Brook Parkway is home to the Alewife MBTA station, its associated parking garage and a series of mid-rise office buildings that generally align CambridgePark Drive. While not fully urban in



character, the elements of a successful business park are in place and require reinforcement and better connections to abutting uses.



## **ACCESS AND LINKAGES**

The Triangle and its abutting districts suffer from the lack of adequate connections from this transportation nexus to those business, shopping and recreational centers. The extension of CambridgePark Drive to Smith Place, the connection of the Triangle to the Fresh Pond Shopping Center via a pedestrian bridge over the tracks, and the inclusion of public connections from CambridgePark Drive to the Little River and the Reservation lands are all desirable objectives.

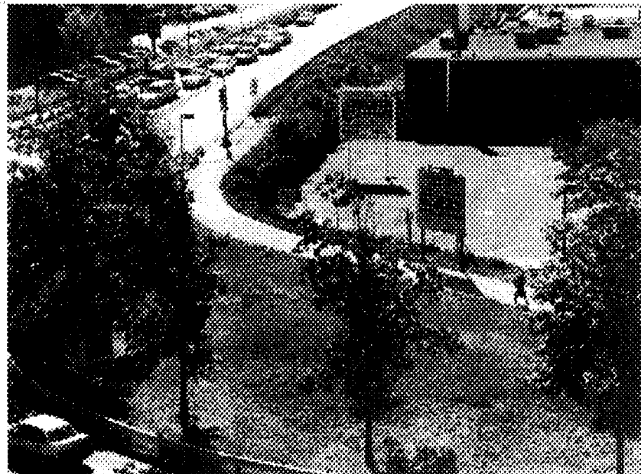
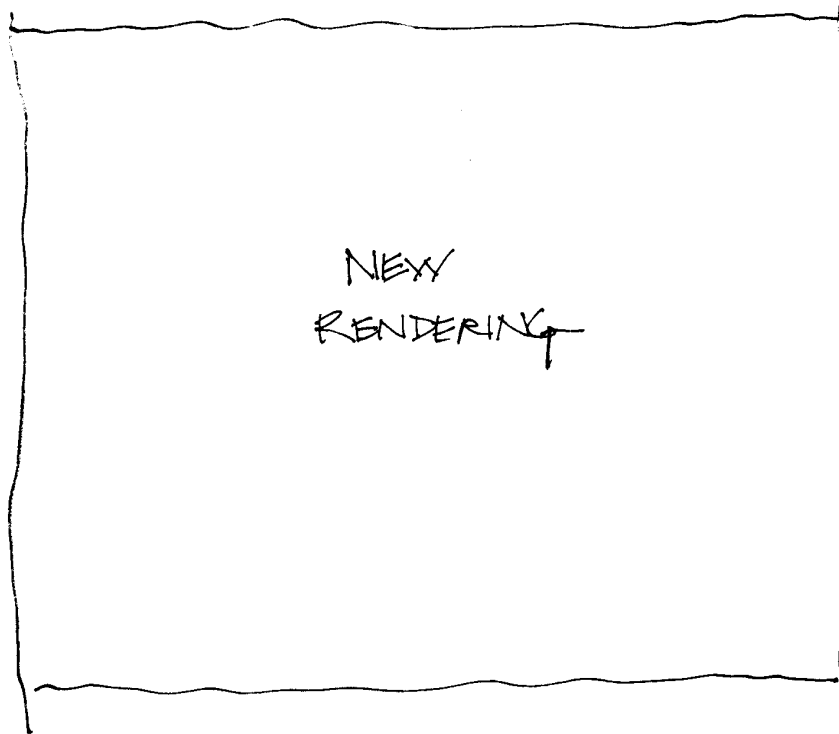
Linkages within the Triangle to required pedestrian and vehicular networks are in need of upgrade. Such networks include Linear Park which leads east and connects to Trolley Square in North Cambridge and Davis Square in Somerville, west to Belmont along the southern edge of the Alewife Reservation, and northwest through Arlington, Lexington and Bedford along the Minuteman Bikeway. Each of these trails is discontinuous through this district or in need of path separation from vehicular traffic and/or upgrade and/or signage. Safe and comfortable access from the North Cambridge neighborhood to the MBTA Station for both pedestrians and bicyclists is key to making the area work. For bicyclists, CambridgePark Drive should have bicycle lanes.

It is intended that a commuter rail station for the Fitchburg Main Line be located at Alewife to provide direct access to Alewife businesses from the western suburbs and from North Station. It is to be funded jointly by the MBTA (who will be responsible for rail alignment work) and by Spaulding & Slye (who will be responsible for station construction). Appropriately positioned, this station will not only be an asset to the area, it could provide a means of safe pedestrian crossing of the tracks. The commuter rail design should be both pedestrian- and bicycle-friendly in terms of access to the station, access to the trains, and bicycle parking.

## **DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK**

Although there are several different property owners in the Triangle, the area is dominated by Spaulding and Slye, which controls the three office buildings built in the 1980s (100, 125, and 150 CambridgePark Drive). A substantial portion of their land is surface parking. In addition, they manage 5.7 acres of vacant land at the western end of the Triangle (also a triangular shape) which they will develop, although they currently have no specific plans for the immediate future for the site.

To the extent possible, future development should define Cambridge Park Drive with parking lots situated between or, preferably, behind buildings. Structured parking would be preferable to the current sea of surface parking. Building setbacks should be minimal, with landscaping but not so that the buildings become isolated from the street. Ground floors should be oriented to the pedestrian, with doors and windows and no blank facades.



A mixed-use development that would serve as a focal point is appropriate at the Aku-Aku site. Its design is pivotal as it will mark and serve as the entry to the business district.

At the northern edge of the Triangle is the Alewife Reservation, onto which buildings currently turn their backs. This edge should be improved, both for existing development and for any future development. Debris should be cleaned, dumpsters screened, and fencing, if needed, upgraded. Pleasant and adequate pedestrian access to the Reservation should be provided where it is determined that public access is appropriate.

#### USE

The Triangle has been developing primarily as an office district, with some research and development (Genetics Institute) and ground floor accessory retail. This more intense development pattern is appropriate to the area, given its proximity to the MBTA station and the future commuter rail station. Other intensive uses, such as a hotel near the T station would also be appropriate.

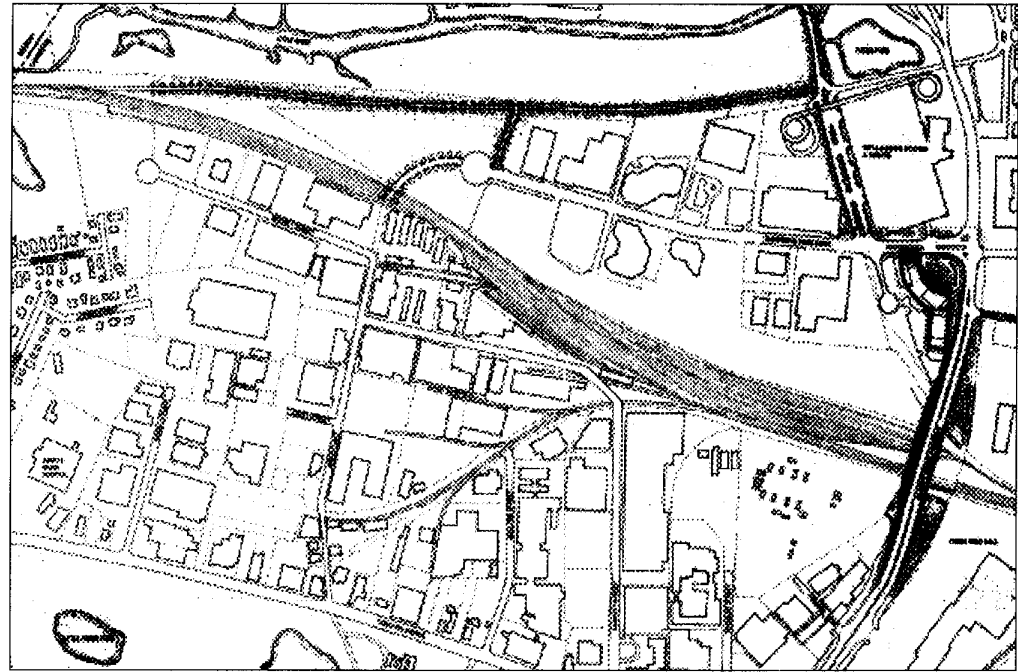
Active ground floor retail use that is accessory in nature should be promoted; these uses would enliven the pedestrian environment along CambridgePark Drive. It should be clear that the intent is not to create a new retail district, nor to establish destination retail, but rather to create pockets of retail activity to provide services that can be used by office workers for whom it would be convenient to walk. Examples of appropriate retail uses are restaurants, dry cleaners, and newspaper/stationery stores.

A variety of use possibilities have been discussed for the end of the Triangle. These include office and service retail, as with the rest of the Triangle, but the creation of public open space and siting of the proposed nature interpretive center have also been proposed. Although the land is clearly in the private domain, incentives such as a transfer of development rights should be available to encourage direct public access to the Alewife Reservation, and additional open space in this area.

#### **URBAN DESIGN CONCEPTS**

#### **NATURAL RESOURCES**

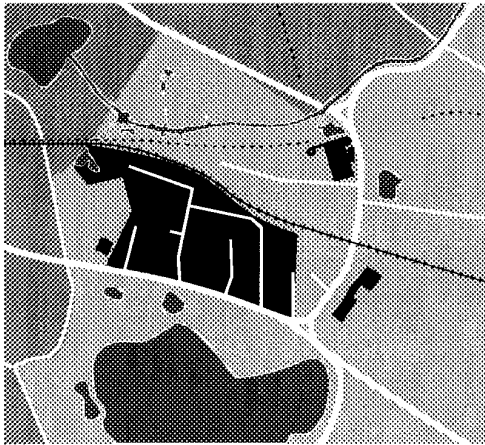
The Triangle also connects to Jerry's Pond, an important open space and water resource, which should be upgraded, protected and maintained, if not by the private owner then through the intervention of public agencies. Public access to the site should be available, but limited to protect sensitive flora and fauna.



### **AREA 3 THE QUADRANGLE**

This acreage, named after its approximate shape, abuts the Fresh Pond Reservation and Concord Avenue to the south and the Triangle and Fitchburg Main Line railroad tracks to the north. To the west lies the Cambridge Highlands residential community, to the east the rear of strip commercial frontage lots of the

Alewife Brook Parkway. Zoned and always envisioned as a moderate-density light industrial area or office park, it has failed to fulfill that role because of both the lack of identity and of easy access from surrounding arterials.



## ACCESS AND LINKAGES

Planning for improvements to the Quadrangle has heretofore hinged on its linkage to the Triangle via a continuation of CambridgePark Drive through to Smith Place. The Alewife Plan of 1979 proposed making Smith Place a widened boulevard with development arrayed along it in a semi-suburban setting. Both the linkage and form aspects of that plan are limited by current realities. Developed properties align a modest 30-40 foot right-of-way and, in several cases, are built out to the front property line. Street widening could only be done in these areas through eminent domain at significant public cost. The railroad, for safety and liability reasons, is loathe to permit an at-grade crossing at Smith, below grade passage is limited by an elevated water table, and above grade ramps and bridges would have tremendous visual impact and are opposed by the landholder to the immediate north whose abutting parcel would be impacted by such a solution. This connection remains desirable. It would not only open the Quadrangle to direct access from Route 2, but would consequently discourage current patterns of egress west along Concord Avenue through Belmont. Negotiations with the railroad, funding agencies, and abutting landowners should continue. Access directly from the Quadrangle into the Cambridge Highlands neighborhood should be precluded.

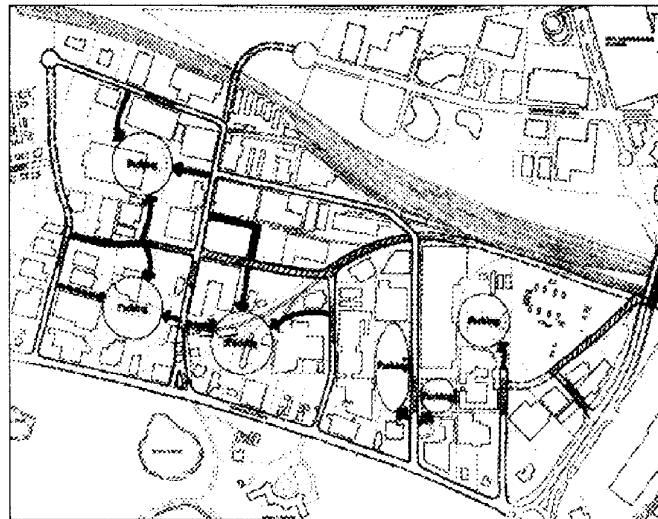
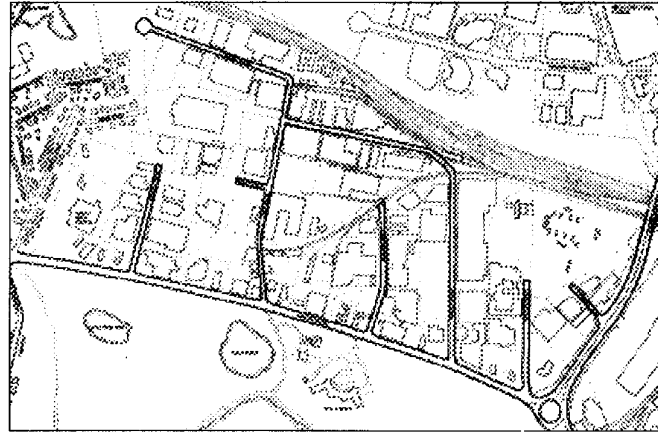
The Quadrangle would benefit from its proximity to the Fresh Pond Reservation if the following four conditions prevailed:

① the Reservation became an asset to its neighbors rather than a detriment through selective landscape maintenance and the provision of inviting fencing;

② provision of a welcoming gate to the Reservation and Black's Nook at the foot of Smith Place;

③ the general upgrading of the north side of Concord Avenue through landscaping and the enforcement of design guidelines; and

④ the widening/straightening of Smith Place at its intersection with Concord.



Upgrading Concord Avenue is recommended as a part of this plan, and should include bicycle lanes or tracks. The existing narrow and angled access to Smith Place poses a legal turning hazard for trucks and needs to be straightened and widened. A perpendicular alignment with Smith Place would necessitate extensive takings, but a more modest taking would provide both the required turning movements and an oasis of green marking an identity for the Quadrangle.

#### DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

The Quadrangle is now composed of diverse, primarily light industrial, uses aligned along streets that rarely connect. Buildings form no clear relationship to the streets. Parking occurs randomly in front of, beside, and behind structures which consequently seem to float in disconnected parking lots along streets that lead nowhere.

The simplest way of bringing a degree of order to the area is to clarify the street system. This can be done, in steps, fairly easily through the use of public rights-of-way. The resulting pattern provides a rough grid surrounding sizeable blocks. These streets are termed Primary Streets. Completion of the system would require nominal new mappings and acquisition.

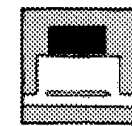
#### USE

The Quadrangle remains an important area for future economic growth. The primary uses envisioned for this area are ones that would build upon its strengths and those of Cambridge in general, while also diversifying the economic base and its concomitant jobs. Research and

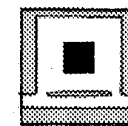
development, light industry, manufacturing, start-up and emerging technology industries are the keys to this mix; some additional office could also be allowed, preferably at the edges toward Concord Avenue and east, where office development has already been focused. The office uses which have been successful at the eastern end of this district have done so through relative seclusion into isolated enclaves. If the area as a whole is to prosper it will require the gradual transformation of use from heavy industry, research and development, pilot manufacturing and light industrial activity with a related service retail component. Major retail is not appropriate, and any housing should be sited directly along Concord Avenue.

#### URBAN DESIGN CONCEPTS

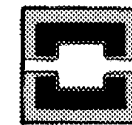
A critical aspect of site planning in the area is how parking is situated on building lots. There are six ways in which



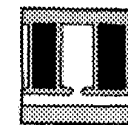
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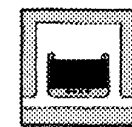
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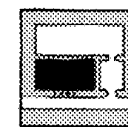
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parking can relate to buildings on a site: ① parking can occur in front of buildings — between buildings and the street, as in strip commercial settings, ② parking can surround buildings, ③ parking can occur in side yards between structures, ④ buildings can surround parking lots in courtyard fashion — which at a large scale is essentially what the Abt Associates complex does, ⑤ parking can occur behind structures, and

⑥ parking for employees can occur behind structures with guest parking in the side yard.

Today, all of these apply to the Quadrangle, resulting in the lack of a sense of place. A very simple rule can clarify the relationship between parking, buildings, and streets on these large blocks: No parking shall occur between buildings and the Primary Street(s) they front, and all buildings must be built within a specified distance of the Primary Street and provide a legible primary entry to the structure fronting that street. Visitor parking can be dealt with by permitting it in one of the two side yards at widths not to exceed 64 feet and prohibiting it from extending closer to the street than the front face of the building. Through these simple devices a consistent and legible pattern of streets, buildings, parking, and entry can be created that, while essentially suburban in function and tailored to the needs of individual parcel developers, is reminiscent of historic Cambridge urban patterns of development.



In addition to the emerging pattern created by streets and building, the area would prosper from some further identity in the form of open space. Open spaces tied to private sector development in the form of mandated setbacks do not feel like a part of the public domain. They are perceived as, and are, yards that belong to the private sector developments to which they are appended. Ideally, an open space within the Quadrangle would be located on the most important street and would take the form of a public square surrounded by secondary streets. To acquire such a square at nominal or no cost requires positioning it in a location such that a single property owner, or a consortium of property owners would benefit from the sites they might hold overlooking the square and/or from incentives the city might offer to the provider of such an amenity. The financial benefits of its positioning must offset the transfer of the land asset. Permitting the transfer of development rights from a deeded parcel may be part of an incentive package that allows this to occur in the position shown, where a single owner today surrounds three sides of the created square.

Even privately owned industrial and business parks today have design covenants tied to the conveyance of property. Because the Quadrangle is under multiple ownership, there is no private entity capable of imposing any architectural standards which will protect new investment and maintain a consistent scale and character. While design guidelines for such parks need not be sophisticated nor complex, they should establish minimum performance standards and developer submittals should be subject to design review. More specific design guidelines are identified in the implementation section of this plan.

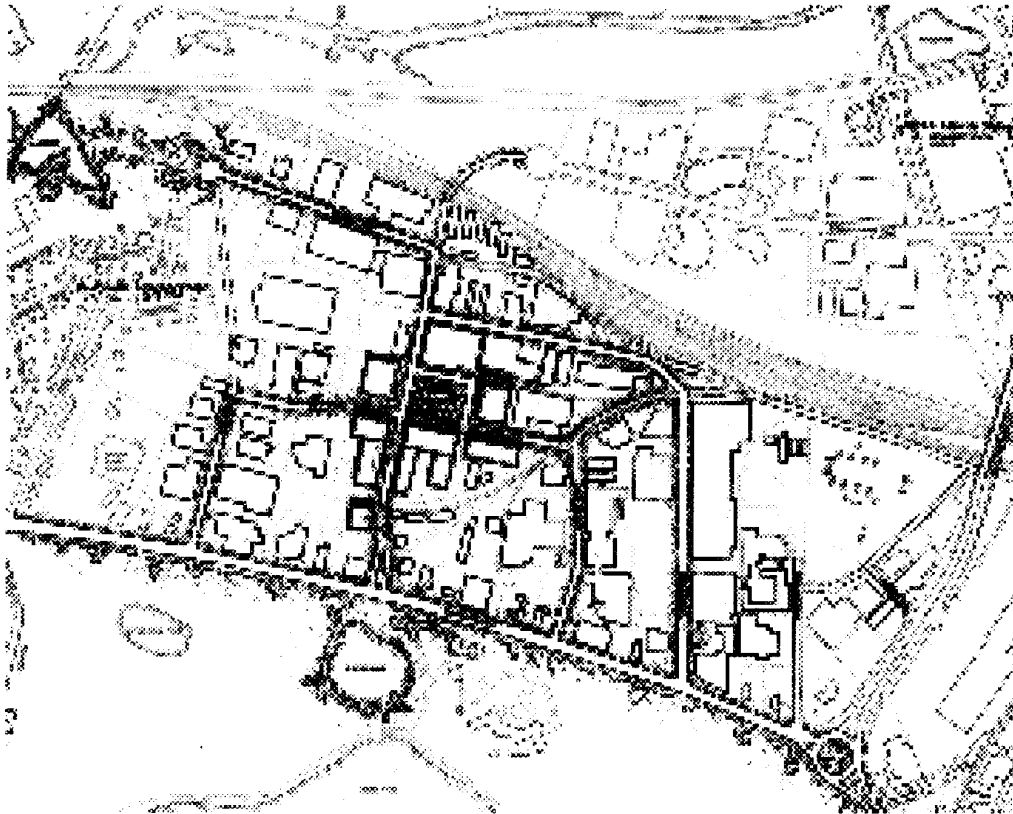
## **NATURAL RESOURCES**

Blair Pond is a neighborhood asset. A master plan is currently being created by the MDC and the Friends of Blair Pond. While Blair Pond should be accessible from the Quadrangle and part of the system of open spaces within the Alewife area, it should not be targeted for heavy recreational use by the general public.

The City's Fresh Pond Management Group is currently addressing selective landscape maintenance and seems receptive to the provision of fencing and a gate at Smith Place, subject to the respectful and limited use of Black's Nook which serves as an environmental and educational resource for school children throughout the city.







## **AREA 4**

### **FRESH POND COMMERCIAL AREA**

A large area, this district is essentially defined by those commercial parcels abutting Alewife Brook Parkway as it transitions from a limited access highway to a residential boulevard (Fresh Pond Parkway) south of Huron Avenue. For planning purposes, it can be thought of in two segments, the Alewife Brook Parkway leg where it bisects twin commercial areas between the Fitchburg Main Line Railroad Bridge and the Alewife Brook Parkway/Concord Avenue Rotary, and the Fresh Pond Parkway where it abuts the Fresh Pond Reservation to its south until it leaves the Reservation at Huron Avenue. This plan deals only limitedly with the Fresh Pond Parkway section of the road - to that point where Concord Avenue splits off eastward- but its principles pertain to the full length of that section.

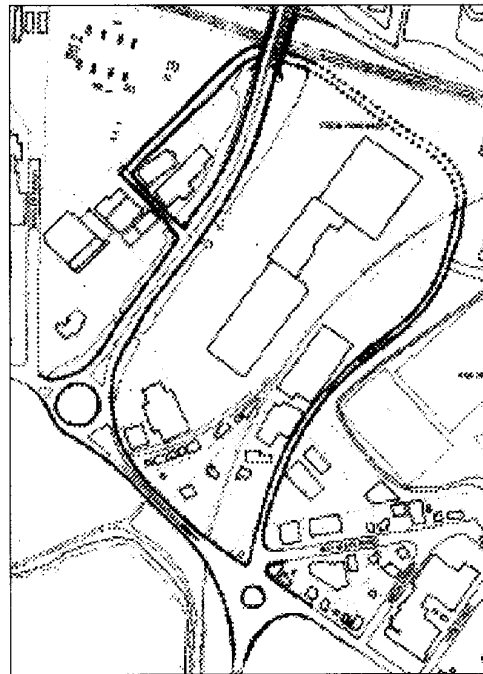
There is another part of this district that tucks in behind the Fresh Pond Shopping Center, fronting Danehy Park and extending along New Street and Bay State Road. Bisected from the shopping center by seldom-used railroad tracks, it transitions from light industrial and distribution uses along New Street to nurseries, health clubs, small offices and outmoded self-storage warehousing to residential neighborhoods along Bay State Road. Zoned IA-1, this latter district provides a type of use increasingly rare in Cambridge, yet currently healthy and devoid of pressures from higher rent uses in this locale.

#### **ACCESS AND LINKAGES**

Access from the Alewife Brook and Fresh Pond Parkways to fronting commercial properties has long stood as a key area of conflict within this district, pitting the demand for increasing curb cuts by property owners against the safety and volume needs of through traffic to limit those curb cuts. Left-hand turns have tied up traffic despite signage prohibiting them in much of the area. The two rotaries at Alewife Brook Parkway/Concord Avenue and Fresh Pond Parkway/Concord Avenue, are difficult to navigate for all forms of traffic, including motorists, pedestrians and bicyclists.

The proposed MDC improvements to the Alewife Brook Parkway will signify a large step in the resolution of these problems in the stretch of Alewife Brook Parkway from Rindge Ave. to the Alewife Brook Parkway/Concord Avenue rotary. A center median will prevent illegal left-hand turns and a new road will route south bound traffic destined for the Fresh Pond Shopping Center along Terminal Road behind the frontage parcels along a new

right-of-way, and under a reconstructed bridge where it will emerge in the shopping center parking lot. The connection through this parking lot to New Street will continue to pose a problem as it represents a short cut for knowledgeable local drivers who often cut diagonally through the lot. It is recommended that the shopping center developers work with the city to align and landscape these connections so that through traffic does not pose a danger to cars or pedestrians destined for the shopping center proper or to cars trying to emerge from designated parking spaces.



The MDC improvements will not resolve the very difficult pedestrian crossing problems at two rotaries nor the turning or curb cut issues south and east of this circle. It is recommended that these be addressed, and that the MDC and City participate actively in a buffering, access upgrade as far south as Huron Avenue.

This district also abuts and provides connections to Danehy Park, the Fresh Pond Reservation and the bikeway and pedestrian systems which crisscross the entire plan area. The following linkages need to be examined:

- Linkages to, through, and abutting pedestrian and bicycle networks.
- Increased connections from surrounding neighborhoods to Danehy Park while maintaining security.
- The possibility of a future pedestrian and/or vehicular linkage from this district to the Quadrangle paralleling the Fitchburg Mainline railroad right-of-way.
- Safe passage for bicyclists and pedestrians at the rotaries and across Concord and along both the Fresh Pond Reservation and east side of the Parkway as far south as Huron Avenue.

#### **DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK**

The future of this area is considered from both the long-term and the short- to intermediate-term perspectives, with emphasis on the latter. It is anticipated that long-term redevelopment of the sites will likely involve razing the current buildings and reconfiguring building locations,

which is desirable. Buildings should front roads, with parking hidden behind buildings or in structures, and landscaping elements should be highlighted. Mixed-use development should be encouraged, with consideration given to a housing component east of Alewife Brook Parkway. Any new development of this scale should undergo a mandatory design review process.

#### **USE**

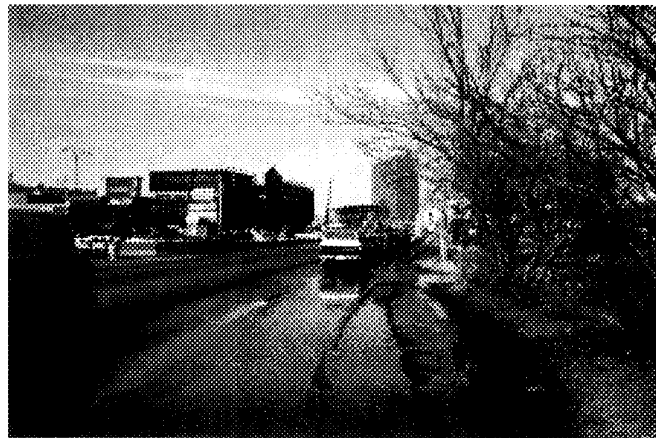
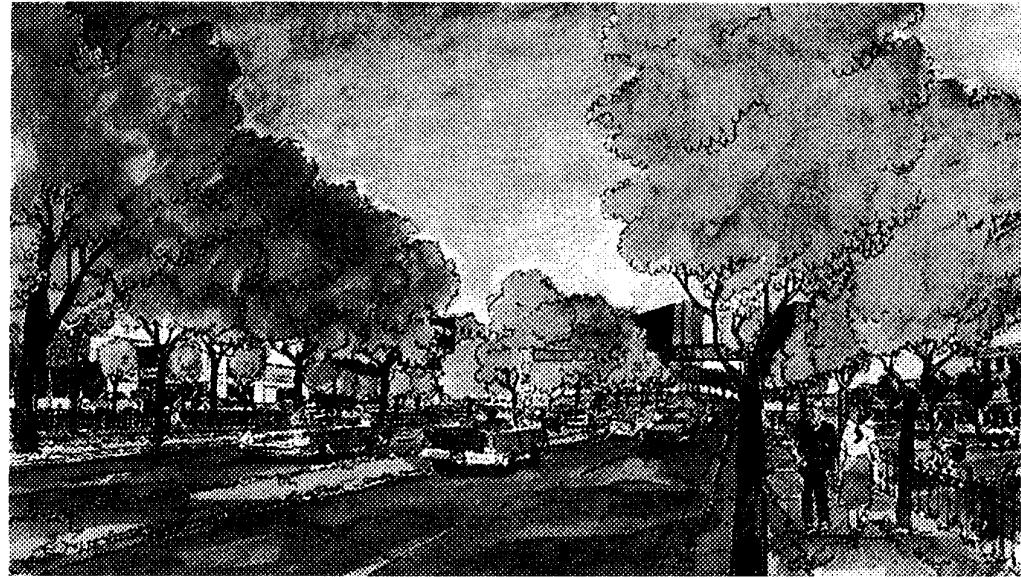
Commercial use along this route is a fact of life and while significant turnover and mid-level rents mark the shopping center, the location will realistically continue to have commercial appeal. The plan discourages larger more intensive commercial uses that would generate significant volumes of traffic and encourages continued mixed-use development with an office component, particularly west of Alewife Brook Parkway. The back commercial/ industrial uses along New Street may eventually transition to office space, given the overlook of Danehy Park, but the narrow depth of lot, railroad frontage to the rear, and adjacency to the loading dock area of the shopping center make them poor candidates for housing. Those parcels surrounding Bay State Road could clearly attach themselves to the Field Street neighborhood while taking full advantage of the accessibility of Danehy Park. This conversion is encouraged with the exception of those parcels directly fronting Concord Avenue.

## URBAN DESIGN CONCEPTS

Of equal concern with the access problems of this area is the sheer unattractiveness of the architecture, siting, parking, and signage. Much of it represents the worst of American strip commercial architecture and planning. Sign controls, including billboards, should be enforced and extended within the prevailing statutes of Massachusetts enabling law. Where those provisions fall short of mandated and retroactive sign and buffering upgrading, a local home rule initiative should be considered to place Cambridge on equal footing with a substantial number of state and local initiatives around the country.

Stores will often not want to decrease gross parking to provide buffering. In many communities, that is the cost of doing business in their city. The plan takes the position that citizens and businesses alike will prosper in the long-term from such initiatives, and that the city as a whole will be enhanced by a more attractive gateway from the northwest.

It is also recommended that as parcels are redeveloped, buildings are moved closer to the street and parking is relocated, in whole or part, behind these structures. The extension of design guidelines and review to cover all or most parcels along this route is recommended. Such a program is already in place, it merely needs refinement.



These guidelines should be extended to include architectural as well as siting, signage and buffering review. While architectural upgrading of existing structures is at the initiative of local owners, the retrofitting of 1950s and 1960s shopping centers is occurring all over the country to bring them into a more advantageous position with their newer competitors. An education program illustrating some of these precedents is recommended.

Along Bay State Road, zoned densities, while low, exceed the built densities of the abutting neighborhood. These new densities are acceptable and perhaps necessary given land and construction costs, but height, setbacks and general form requirements should reflect the characteristics of the existing housing stock. On the northern frontage of Bay State Road, abutting Danehy Park, increased residential densities might be permitted as an incentive to encourage housing if heights remain 45 feet or less.

Consistent with the improved access program underway by the MDC, their relandscaping of the Alewife Brook Parkway will mark a major improvement in the aesthetic vehicular experience of traversing this area. Where there is room to plant a double row of trees alongside the Parkway, it is recommended. Likewise, low fencing or shrubbery should help screen the expanse of parking lots from the road. The MDC is urged to continue this landscape program south to Huron Avenue, particularly in those areas of abutting commercial usage. Pedestrian zones along this edge have been obscured and need re-establishment. The narrowness of the public right-of-way in this area is recognized and public-private partnerships may have to be established to afford substantive improvements.

As in the Quadrangle, the Fresh Pond Reservation needs upgrading along Concord Avenue and the Parkway edge such that it becomes an asset to the entry experience to the city.

